

**Amendments to the Specification:**

Please replace the paragraph starting on p. 1, line 11, with the following amended paragraph:

This application is related to the subject matter disclosed in United States Patent Application Serial No. 09/633,088, entitled "Data Storage System," filed on August 4, 2000, now U.S. Patent No. 6,658,478, and United States Patent Application Serial No. 09/751,649, entitled "Communication Link Protocol Optimized for Storage Architectures", filed simultaneously herewith on December 29, 2000, both of which are assigned to the present Assignee and are incorporated herein by reference.

Please replace the paragraph starting on p. 6, line 12, with the following amended paragraph:

FIG. 1 illustrates an interconnect system 10 within which a communication link protocol and associated methods, according to embodiments of the present invention, may be utilized. Interconnect system 10 may be incorporated into a data storage system which provides mass storage for data and information. Such a data storage system is described in U.S. Application Serial No. 09/633,088, entitled "Data Storage System," filed on August 4, 2000, now U.S. Patent No. 6,658,478, the entirety of which is incorporated by reference herein. In general, interconnect system 10 functions to support communication in the data storage system.